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## Lantern Theater Company Announces Fall 2021 Digital Season

***Newly Filmed Productions Include World Premiere Play by Steve H. Broadnax III and Charles Dumas and U.S. Premiere Adaptation of Camus' THE PLAGUE***

PHILADELPHIA (July 13, 2021) – **Lantern Theater Company** is thrilled to announce its new **Fall 2021 Digital Season**, which will include fully realized filmed productions of new plays that further the Lantern's commitment to theater that investigates the spirit of our times: ***Me and the Devil***, a world premiere by **Steve H. Broadnax III** and **Charles Dumas** about the great American blues musician **Robert Johnson**, directed by Broadnax; and the American premiere of ***The Plague*** by **Neil Bartlett**, adapted from *La Peste* by **Albert Camus** and directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**.

**Premiering September 9, 2021**, ***Me and the Devil*** marks the Lantern's first collaboration with nationally prominent director and playwright Steve H. Broadnax III. Written by Broadnax and Charles Dumas, this world premiere play with music shows the dramatic confrontation between the great American blues musician Robert Johnson and the Devil from whom, legend has it, Johnson received his extraordinary talent. After being poisoned in a juke joint by a jealous husband, Johnson – who wrote such classics as “Crossroad Blues,” “Love in Vain,” and “Me and the Devil Blues” – must use all his wit in a final contest with the Devil to keep his soul.

Filmed at the Lantern in summer 2021, *Me and the Devil* was directed by Broadnax in his Lantern debut. An award-winning director, Broadnax's many credits include ***The Hot Wing King*** by **Katori Hall** at Signature Theatre in New York, which closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic and went on to win the **2021 Pulitzer Prize for Drama**. This fall, Broadnax will direct the Broadway premiere of **Keenan Scott II's *Thoughts of a Colored Man***, which he directed in its 2019 world premiere co-production at Baltimore Center Stage and Syracuse Stage.

**Premiering October 7, 2021, *The Plague*** is an American premiere adaptation by British playwright Neil Bartlett, from *La Peste* by Albert Camus and called “a chilling fable... a compelling 90-minute experience” by *The Guardian*. Originally written in the aftermath of World War II, Camus’ award-winning novel uses the metaphor of a biological plague to denounce the spread of fascism in Europe – and Camus’ concerns are no less urgent today. In awarding Camus the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature, the Swedish Academy cited “his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times.”

“The Lantern is excited to share these exceptional stories in a fall season of unique artistic goals and safety considerations,” said Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**, who will also direct *The Plague*. “Our goal is to provide audiences with authentic Lantern productions, delivered virtually in recognition of the continued reality of the times, while taking necessary precautions to keep artists, technicians, and audiences safe. As the performing arts are one of the hardest-hit industries due to Covid-19, producing plays to be streamed virtually also enables the Lantern to provide professional opportunities for our highly talented local theater artists, including actors, directors, designers, stage managers, technicians, and everyone else who works behind the scenes to bring these great stories to life.”

**Digital Fall Passes are now on sale for \$35** and are available online at [lanterntheater.org](http://lanterntheater.org) or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Individual tickets for *Me and the Devil* and *The Plague* are also now available for **\$20 per household/device**. Closed captioning is available for all Lantern digital productions, which can be viewed on most internet-connected devices with email/web browser access, including desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and select smart TVs. The Lantern Box Office will be accessible by phone and email for extended hours throughout each production’s streaming period to provide assistance.

## **Lantern Theater Company’s Fall 2021 Digital Season**

### **ME AND THE DEVIL**

World Premiere

By Steve H. Broadnax III and Charles Dumas

Directed by Steve H. Broadnax III

**Premieres September 9, 2021**

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you’d make a deal with the Devil? Legend has it that Robert Leroy Johnson struck a deal with the Devil to be the best blues musician who ever lived. In this dramatic play with music, Johnson aims to break that deal as his spirit calls to life his family, friends, and lovers to bear witness to his superlative talent and fearlessness.

## **THE PLAGUE**

American Premiere

From *La Peste* by Albert Camus, adapted by Neil Bartlett

Directed by Charles McMahon

**Premieres October 9, 2021**

Infection, quarantine, panic, and closed borders are invoked in this sharp adaptation of Camus' masterful novel *La Peste*, originally written following World War II to serve as a political warning to future generations about fascism. Bartlett's compelling drama is all the more startling for how contemporary and timeless the action plays out on the stage: "How would I react if the plague came for me?"

### **About Lantern Theater Company**

Founded in 1994 and now in its 28th season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Philadelphia region with artistic and educational programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies and live performances in support of curricular learning.

The Lantern has been one of the most active theater companies in the country throughout the Covid-19 health crisis, retaining its staff and creating new opportunities for Philadelphia theater artists to earn income and practice their craft while theaters remain closed. Artistic programming during the pandemic has included live readings of Shakespeare plays in spring 2020 as part of *Lantern Anywhere*; filmed versions of fully realized theatrical productions of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol* in December 2020 and *Molly Sweeney* by Brian Friel in early 2021; and this spring's Plays from the Lantern Archives series, which included professionally filmed and edited versions of the 2017 world premiere production of *The Craftsman* by Bruce Graham, and three recent Shakespeare productions: *Measure for Measure* (2019), *The Tempest* (2018), and *Coriolanus* (2017). Looking beyond this fall's digital productions of *Me and the Devil* and *The Plague*, the Lantern will announce its 2021/22 season in August 2021.

More information about the Lantern is available online at [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org).